

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6013

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CINCLANT

CNO

SECDEF

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USNATO PRIORITY 1327

UNCLAS REYKJAVIK 0166

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, PFOR, IC, UK

SUBJECT: ICELAND-UK FISHERIES DISPUTE: ALTHING DEBATE ON
UK PROPOSALS

1. PRIME MINISTER HALLGRIMSSON ANNOUNCED TO SPECIAL
ALTHING SESSION LAST NIGHT THAT GOI HAD FOUND UNAC-
CEPTABLE PROPOSALS FOR SETTLEMENT OF FISHERIES DIS-
PUTE OFFERED BY UK IN RECENT LONDON TALKS.

2. HALLGRIMSSON SAID UK PROPOSALS HAD INCLUDED RE-
QUEST FOR 28 PERCENT SHARE OF TOAL ALLOWED ANNUAL
COD CATCH IN ICELAND'S WATERS, WITH STIPULATION THAT
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BRITISH GET MINIMUM OF 65,000 TONS AND UP TO 76,000

TONS DEPENDING ON OVERALL CATCH. IN ADDITION, UK SOUGHT CATCH OF OTHER SPECIES IN AMOUNT THAT WOULD BRING BRITISH TOTAL TAKE TO 85,000 TONS ANNUALLY. PRIMEMIN SAID UK WAS PREPARED TO DISCUSS RECOGNITION OF ICELAND'S CLAIM TO 200-MILE FISHERIES JURISDICTION AS PART OF AGREEMENT. VARIOUS FORMULAS WERE SET FORTH REGARDING DURATION OF POSSIBLE SETTLEMENT INVOLVING FIXED PERIODS OF TIME OR TIMETABLE BASED ON STATUS OF LOS NEGOTIATIONS. GOI HAD INFORMED HMG OF ITS DECISION, HALLGRIMSSON TOLD PARLIAMENT, AND EXPRESSED READINESS TO RESUME DISCUSSIONS WITH VIEW TO SHORT-TERM AGREEMENT.

3. EXPLAINING DECISION, HALLGRIMSSON TRACED STUDIES OF MARINE BIOLOGISTS AND THEIR CONCLUSION THAT THERE MUST BE CONSIDERABLE CUTBACK ON TOTAL COD CATCH IN ICELAND'S WATERS. WHILE AVOIDING ANY COMMENTS ON SPECIFICS OF UK QUOTA PROPOSALS THAT COULD BE CONSTRUED AS COUNTER-OFFER, PRIMEMIN MADE CLEAR THAT AMOUNTS SOUGHT BY UK WOULD CAUSE UNACCEPTABLE REDUCTION IN CATCH PERMITTED TO ICELANDIC FISHERMEN. GOI WAS "DISAPPOINTED" IN UK PROPOSALS FOR TWO GENERAL REASONS, PRIMEMIN ADDED. THEY FAILED TO RECOGNIZE PRIORITY RIGHTS OF COASTAL STATES AND STILL FAILED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FISHERIES TO ICELAND'S ECONOMY DESPITE FACT THAT 80 PERCENT OF COUNTRY'S EXPORTS ARE BASED ON FISHING.

4. DURING DEBATE PRIME MIN SAID ICELAND REALLY HAS ONLY 2 CHOICES: MAKE AN AGREEMENT WHICH THEN PROVIDES SOME CONTROL BY ICELAND, OR MAKE NO AGREEMENT AND THEREBY HAVE LITTLE OR NO CONTROL OVER STOCKS THAT CAN BE FISHED IN THE WATERS HERE. HE ALSO SAID ICELAND CANNOT BE VICTORIOUS IF IT WITHDRAWS FROM NATO AND THERE IS A LIMIT AS TO WHAT ICELAND CAN EXPECT FROM A THIRD NATION OR A GROUP OF NATIONS (IE NATO).

5. FONMIN EINAR AGUSTSSON SPOKE FOR COALITION PARTY-
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NER PROGRESSIVE PARTY. HE SAID PP WAS IN FULL ACCORD WITH DECISIONS ANNOUNCED BY PRIMEMIN. HE DEPLORED FACT THAT UK HAD REQUESTED FIXED PERCENTAGE OF COD STOCK FROM ICELAND'S WATERS, BUT SUPPORTED DECISION TO SEEK FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH VIEW TO SHORT AGREEMENT. IN MEANTIME, AGUSTSSON SAID, LAW WOULD BE ENFORCED ON FISHING GROUNDS. (IE NO PROMISE TO AVOID HAR-

RASSING UK TRAWLERS) AGUSTSSON STRESSED DESIRE-BILITY OF NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT IF POSSIBLE, NOTING INCALCULABLE DANGERS PRESENT IF CURRENT STATE OF FRICTION BETWEEN ICELANDIC AND UK VESSELS CONTINUES. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT IF EFFORTS TO REACH SETTLEMENT ARE NOT SUCCESSFUL, NATION WILL AGAIN FACE QUESTIONS OF WHETHER TO BREAK RELATIONS WITH UK OR REEXAMINE POSITION TOWARD NATO. SUCH STEPS MUST BE CAREFULLY WEIGHED, FONMIN SAID, SINCE IT MAY NOT PROVE WISE TO BE LEFT ALONE AND WITHOUT SUPPORT IN DISPUTE.

6. PEOPLES ALLIANCE PARLIAMENTARY LEADER LUDVIK JOSEFSSON CONDEMNED GOVERNMENT'S DELAY AND SILENCE ON UK PROPOSALS SINCE LONDON TALKS. BRITISH OFFER SHOULD HAVE BEEN REJECTED AT ONCE, JOSEFSSON SAID. HE ADDED THAT PA POLICY IS THAT THERE BE NO NEGOTIATIONS WITH UK SINCE THERE IS NOTHING ABOUT WHICH TO NEGOTIATE. HE SAID HIS PARTY STANDS READY TO COOPERATE WITH OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES TO STRENGTHEN COAST GUARD AND TAKE OTHER STEPS TO UPHOLD ICELAND'S POSITION IN DISPUTE. JOSEFSSON ALSO INCLUDED DENUNCIATION OF "AGGRESSION" BY BRITISH "NATO-WARSHIPS" AND NOTED WORTHLESSNESS OF "DEFENSE" AGREEMENT WITH US THAT AFFORDED NO DEFENSE AGAINST SUCH AGGRESSION.

7. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHAIRMAN BENEDIKT GRONDAL SAID HIS PARTY STILL FELT THAT THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT BETWEEN ICELAND AND UK BUT HE SUPPORTED GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS. TO DO OTHERWISE, GRONDAL SAID, WOULD HARM ICELAND DIPLOMATICALLY. HE NOTED UNCLASSIFIED

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THAT PRIMEMIN HAS MENTIONED NO SPECIFIC QUOTAS IN CONNECTION WITH POSSIBLE SHORT-TERM AGREEMENT AND SAID HE RESERVED HIS POSITION ON THIS QUESTION UNTIL SUCH FIGURES EMERGED. GRONDAL POINTED OUT THAT THERE HAD BEEN REFERENCES IN VARIOUS QUARTERS TO WORLD SUPPORT AND SYMPATHY FOR ICELAND'S CAUSE. HE WAS SKEPTICAL OF THESE CLAIMS, NOTING THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO OUTRIGHT GESTURES OF WORLD SUPPORT EXCEPT PRESSURE WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN EXERTED ON UK BY NATO.

8. LIBERALS AND LEFTISTS PARLIAMENTARY LEADER KARVEL PALMASON ALSO SAID THAT GOI HAD NOT NEEDED SUCH LONG TIME TO REJECT UK OFFERS. HE SAID HE HOPED GOI WAS NOW CONVINCED OF FUTILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS.

TIATIONS WITH BRITISH AND ADDED THAT IF UK AGAIN
SENT IN WARSHIPS ICELAND SHOULD DEMAND THAT
NATO AND US MEET THEIR DEFENSE OBLIGATIONS TO
COUNTRY. OTHERWISE, PALMASON SAID, ICELAND MUST
REVIEW ITS MEMBERSHIP IN ALLIANCE.
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